E 16 (19) Bodine, ϕ

November 4, 1977

EXCISE

Dear Senator Kennedy:

I refer to the letter your office transmitted from your constituent [ ] concerning the proposed sale of F-16 aircraft to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has stated that it wishes to purchase the F-15, not the F-16, and I assume it is this aircraft to which your constituent refers. 16

U.S.-Saudi cooperation, based on mutual confidence, serves our broader concerns on issues of vital importance to peace and stability in the Middle East and to international economic welfare. A continuing U.S. role in meeting the legitimate defense needs of Saudi Arabia is an integral part of that cooperation and hence acts to reduce the dangers of the sort [ ] raises in his letter to you. 16

Saudi Arabia is a vast country with the largest petroleum reserves in the world and one of the smallest military forces of any major country in the Middle East. Its entire military force structure is defensively, not offensively, oriented. Saudi Arabia has, in the judgment of this Administration, acted as a moderating force regarding Middle East peace efforts.

The Saudi Government, working closely with the United States for many years in developing its military defenses in a systematic fashion consistent with its sizable territory and limited manpower, has placed appropriate emphasis on developing a modern defensive air force. The F-15 would replace the aging British Lightnings and fulfill the same defensive air-to-air intercept mission the Lightning has fulfilled for over 15 years. The Ford Administration agreed to sell the Saudis an advanced fighter; the Saudis, after a study of the various alternatives, chose to request the F-15. After careful

The Honorable
Edward M. Kennedy,
United States Senate

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PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS b-6

review of this question, this Administration determined that a legitimate military requirement exists. We will proceed in our consideration of this matter at the appropriate time in close consultation with the Congress.

It should be noted that although the Saudis consider themselves to be in a state of war with Israel, the Saudis have never engaged in armed conflict with Israel nor have they transferred U.S. military equipment to any of the confrontation states.

This Administration has, as you know, adopted a policy of restraint in arms sales worldwide. This policy recognizes, at the same time, our need to assist our friends and allies in their legitimate defense needs. This includes Saudi Arabia. This Administration has considered this arms sale in light of the arms transfer policy and our desire to work closely with Congress on all arms transfer questions.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.

Drafted: NEA/ARP:BKBodine

Clearances: See attached blue

SECOND PAGE RETYPED IN H BY EZMcKINLEY PER RAFlaten 10/28/77.

F-16

b6

August 30, 1977

President Carter
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Carter:

I must express my deepest concern as regards the proposed sale of the F-16 supersonic fighter airplane to Saudia Arabia. My primaryconcern is, of course, the security of the state of Israel. Not only would this upset the delicate balance of power that exists in the Middle East, but the possibility of these these advanced weapons being available to other nations who adhere to more belligerent policy toward Israel would only serve to increase tension and the possibility of actual armed conflict in this area of the world. The consequences of further armed conflict need not even be discussed here; any American Jew , however would realize that they would be disastrous, to say the least.

Another matter that must be pointed out is that of your political credibility. Campaign promises aside, everyone is all too aware of your recently voiced desire to limit the sale of advanced weapons to foreign nations. We shall soon see to what degree this desire is carried out. I am sure that Jewish citizens will be anxiously awaiting the outcome of this "proposed sale", and the day that the United States willcease to be the principal vendors of weaponry, i.e. death and destruction, on this earth.

Sincerely,

b6

cc: Senator Edward Kennedy
Senator Ed Brooke
Congressman Silvio Conte

P770154-2363

United States Senate

ACTION
is assigned to
NEA

10/4

Respectfully referred to:

State Dept

Because of the desire of this office to be responsive to all inquiries and communications, your consideration of the attached is requested. Your findings and views, in duplicate form, along with return of the enclosure, will be appreciated by

Edward M Kennedy
U.S.S.

Form #2

Attn: Fran McElroy

RE: Concern regarding possible sale of F-16 fighter planes to Saudia Arabia.

From: [redacted]

[redacted] b6

(2)

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

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